



The Power of a Wish

by Jeanne Ferris

Photography courtesy of Make-A-Wish Foundation of San Diego

On a mission to simply enrich the human experience with hope, strength and joy, the Make-A-Wish Foundation has since 1980 granted wishes for children with life threatening medical conditions. With 64 chapters worldwide, the nonprofit has granted more than 200,000 wishes over the past 30 years – an average of one wish every 40 minutes.

It all started with a simple wish: the heart of a seven-year-old boy with leukemia dreaming of one day becoming a police officer, and his name was Christopher. With his health deteriorating, a family friend and custom's officer arranged for Chris to spend a day with the team, complete with a helicopter ride, a custom-tailored uniform and the opportunity to earn his wings after passing the motorcycle proficiency test on his battery-operated motorcycle. Chris was also sworn in as the first honorary DPS patrolman in Arizona state history. Chris lost his battle that same week.

A life-threatening medical condition for anyone is heartbreaking, especially in regard to children. As in the case of Christopher, a

granted wish provides a joyful experience of life-affirming enrichment and a respite from doctor visits and medical treatments for wish kids and their families. Ranging from two-and-a-half years of age to 18, children have the opportunity to be, meet, go or have whatever they may wish.

"One young man named Darren wished to give new uniforms to his high school football team last year," shared Chris Sichel, CEO of Make-A-Wish San Diego. "Disney vacations and celebrity wishes tend to be the most popular. [In the end], it's all about helping kids identify their one true wish and working our 'magic' to make it happen."

One of 64 chapters worldwide, the San Diego



chapter was founded in 1983 by Jamie Tucker, and has held a devoted volunteer outreach in all capacities for over a decade; the chapter has granted more than 2,700 wishes to date, and expects to grant an estimated 195 wishes this year alone. It is one of a small cluster of San Diego non-profits who have earned the designation "Accredited Charity" by the Better Business Bureau/Wish Giving Alliance. And according to Sichel, "This means we have demonstrated our ability to meet their 20 rigorous standards of governance, financial accountability, and effectiveness. We are very proud to be in an elite class of non-profit organizations."

As of March 2010, the average cost of a wish is \$7,205; for every dollar donated, 75 percent goes towards wish granting – which exceeds program service allocation standards set forth by leading charity watchdog groups. Despite economic challenges, maintaining the quality of wishes granted is not negotiable and donor support is needed more than ever.

"Wishes can have a profound impact on the entire family, because it is not just a wish for that child, it's something that his or her family can be part of as well. And, we also see a ripple effect that wishes can have on the community, from the limo driver who takes that kid to the airport, the clerk that helps a child on a shopping spree wish, the volunteers who work hands-on with the organization, and the donors who make it all possible," said Sichel. "Even the person sitting at home reading this story might be inspired to give back, or be reminded of what's really important in life. This is what we refer to as the 'power of a wish'." ♦

Make-a-Wish Foundation
Web: makeawish-sd.org



UPCOMING EVENTS

■ Fashion With a Passion

Date: April 16

Location: Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising (FIDM)

This special ladies fashion event features sumptuous cuisine and outstanding wines, a fabulous Vendor Village where guests will find the latest fashion, spa and beauty finds, an elegant designer fashion show, participate in makeup, hair and fashion demonstrations, a myriad of special raffles and auctions, the Ultimate Accessories SWAP, and so much more.

Web: fashionwithapassion.org

■ Amazing Race For Children's Wishes

Date: May 1

Location: Coronado Yacht Club

Collectively hosted by the Coronado, Coronado Cays and Navy Yacht Clubs, the 3rd annual "Amazing Race for Children's Wishes" extends a day of adventure modeled after the show, "Amazing Race." With a variety of team challenges followed by a great party, the event raised more than \$50,000 in 2010.

Web: make3wishes.org